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ABSTRACT

A general outline of the development and the status quo of political education in the Netherlands, focusing on the degree of internationalization, is presented. In the light of current and future educational/political developments, attention also is devoted to the North-South issue (the existence of people in developing nations in relation to the existence of people in more developed countries), and the political demands to develop the European dimension in education. An 18-item bibliography is included. (Author/DB)

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CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN POLITICAL EDUCATION, PARTICULARLY THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

New developments in the Netherlands

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BIOGRAPHY

Hans Hooghoff (1945) works at the National Institute for Curriculum Development (Enschede, the Netherlands) as project manager of the National Developemnt Education Network and as a consultant for Social Studies. Previously, he taught at a school for secondary education. He studied law and sociology at tne University of Utrecht.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN POLITICAL EDUCATION, PARTICULARLY THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

New developments in the Netherlands

1. Introduction

This paper gives a general outline of the development and the status quo of political education in the Netherlands, focusing particularly on the degree of internationalization. In the light of current and future educational-political developments, attention is devoted subsequently to the consolidation of the position of the North-South issue in the curriculum, and the political demand to give the theme "Europe" a structural place.

2. Status quo of political education

2.1. Developments and internationalization

In the sixties, social change and discussions in education in the US and Western Europe give rise to a different definition of the term "curriculum". Attention shifted from descriptions of subject matter to planning of the form and structure of teaching. The term "curriculum" acquired a more dynamic flavour. This was characteristic of those days, when socioeconomic progress and personal development were high priority issues.

Starting in the US, and later followed by countries such as West Germany, Great Britain, and the Netherlands as well, curriculum development projects were launched. First, as usual, for mathematics and sciences (the Sputnik effect!) and only much later for the social subjects.

Responding to the demand for social relevant education aimed at the individual, social and political sciences tried to gain a stronger position in the school curriculum.

Within the context of national and international democratization movements, these efforts contributed towards the initiation of curriculum projects for political education in several countries. Especially in the early seventies, these projects were often characterized by academic discussion. Supporters and opponents argued about the desirability and feasibility of pedagogical and didactic starting points.

In countries like West Germany, the U.K. and the Netherlands, these curriculum activities produced a wide range of teaching materials, with both good and bad practical examples. By the end of the seventies, teachers, but also the inspectorate and the government, acknowledge the importance of "political competence".

However, in spite of this legitimization, political education was and still is faced with a number of essential problems, such as the absence of a consistent body of subject matter derived from academic disciplines. This is reflected in the extremely broad definition given to political education in schools. This varies from an introduction to the social sciences to studies of current events, from a spotlight on government and parliament even to the propagation of certain party political views. The quantity of teaching materials has failed to contribute to an improvement of the quality of political education. To achieve effective political education, aimed at the formation of well-founded opinions about social issues and political competence, other strategies and conditions are apparently necessary.

Especially in the eighties, new topics demand the attention of the teacher, mainly for moral reasons: Development Education, Intercultural Education, Peace Education, Human Rights Education, etc. Although these new "movements" give an impulse to pedagogical innovation, at the same time they threaten the concreteness and validity of the subject matter

of Political Education. They offer the possibility of adding a global dimension to the curriculum, but they take no account of the overlap, the limitations of the timetable and the risk of fragmentation. The so-called global studies overemphasize the affective goals, and pay little attention to sound subject matter. Global education has not seldom been considered synonymous with biased social criticism. One of the results of this trend is that in the Netherlands, but also in the U.K. and West Germany, the image of political education has deteriorated. Political education was identified with radical social movements, and in fact had to be justified all over again.

2.2. The curriculum project "Social and Political Education"

In the period from 1981 to 1987, a project was carried out at the National Institute for Curriculum Development, a government institution, on the subject of "Social and Political Education". This curriculum project, aimed primarily at enhancing the quality and implementation of political education, resulted in:

* a core curriculum for social and political education for 14 to 16-year-olds;
* a handbook for planning this school subject;
* lesson plans and lesson series as examples of the core curriulum.

Teachers, teacher training colleges, the inspectorate and research centres were involved in the project. Until 1985, all efforts were focused on achieving a minimum consensus about starting points and goals on a national level. Considering the suspicious attitude of parents, teachers, government and unions, reaching a minimum consnsus was imperative to the innovational strategy.

By defining as unambiguously as possible the minimum of knowledge and insight pupils must have at their disposal to form an opinion concerning national as well as international

issues, and by offering concrete lesson examples, the project has contributed towards the achievement of the desired consensus in the Netherlands. Credit is also due to the participants, however, for without the support of enthusiastic teachers with widely different views, the stimulating role of the government and the inspectorate, pupils who saw the "point" of political education, and special in-service training programs, this would not have been possible.

But consensus alone is not enough. This says nothing about the extent to which political education has gained an everyday, natural position in school practice. In other words, the extent to which effective implementation has taken place. With the institution by the government of an experimental examination in "Social and Political Education" until 1992, linking up closely with the core curriculum designed, a start has at least been made with an implementation strategy.

In October 1988, a university research center will complete a study among 40 schools as to the transferability and usability of the teaching kits published. In this way, we hope to develop tools for implementation which will guarantee a wider distribution and use of the project results. One of the things being looked into is what product specifications a teaching kit must meet if it is to lead to other, better learning outcomes and the adoption of new "outlooks" by teachers.

(An evaluation report of the project "Social and Political Education 1981-1987" and a report of the implementation study can be obtained on request from the National Institute for Curriculum Development.)

3.3. The content of social and political studies

In answering the question what determines the content, three

points should be taken into account:

- the demand of the pupil to be equipped in such a way that he or she is able to find his or her own place in society, for example by knowing about phenomena and problems and having formed an opinion about them;
- the demand of society for well-epuipped people, who can function adequately in society and are able to cope with the phenomena and problems encountered in society;
- the instruments offered by the social sciences (political science and sociology) for analysing social and political phenomena and problems.

These three things are also reflected in the general goal: "the pupils are able to cope with" indicates a need to learn on the part of the pupils. "Learn to cope with current social and political phenomena and problems" refers to a demand on the part of society, namely that pupils should have insight into these phenomena and problems; how decisions are made in society with regard to these matters and what rules are involved in this process. Overemphasis of this aspect leads to "adapting political education", in which the pupils' formation of opinions is pushed into the background. "On the basis of relevant and reliable information" has to do with the scientific instruments offered particularly by the social sciences for analysing social and political phenomena and problems.

In other words: if a balanced body of subject matter is to be determined, all these criteria implicit in the general goal must be taken into account. Ways of realizing this are:

a. to work thematically, which means that social and political phenomena and problems are presented in a context the pupils understand;
b. to distinguish thematic fields, thus imposing a structure on social and political phenomena and problems and meeting the demand from society;
c. to use approaches and key concepts borrowed from the social sciences.

We have chosen to order subject matter in thematic fields, with a view to structuring social problems and presenting them in a way pupils can understand. A thematic field is a framework for mapping out social and political phenomena and problems which can be recognized and viewed in their interlinking relations. The following thematic fields can be regarded as a concrete organization of the day-to-day reality of teachers' situations:

1. Education	family, relationships, mass media
2. Living environment	cultural minorities, environment
3. Work and leisure	unemployment, social benefits
4. Technology and society	privacy, the information society
5. State and society	political decision-making, crime and criminal law, parliamentary democracy
6. International relations	North-South, East-West issues European Studies

Approaches

By determining the thematic fields it has been made clear what kind of social and political phenomena and problems are to be discussed. Still unexplained is how this is to be done, what instruments are to be used. Social and political phenomena and problems are thus analysed:

1. a. from the points of view of the various social groups;
   b. proceeding from the question what interests and relations of power and authority (and corresponding positions) are involved;
   c. proceeding from the question what standards, values and expectations underlie one's own actions and those of others;
   d. proceeding from the question what goals and means are involved in one's own actions and those of others;
2. against the background of the development of the phenomenon or problem under scrutiny;

3. in comparison to similar problems in different societies.

The following key concepts are used in the approach: (views of) groups, power, authority, position, standards, values, expectations, goals, means.

Summary

After a very pragmatically oriented practice at classroom level, followed by a period of many academic disputes on a more theoretical level, bearing a strong flavour of social criticism, clarity and consensus have grown concerning the goal and content of social and political education in the Netherlands. Thus justification has been achieved. All energy must now be turned to the task of implementation to promote and guarantee the quality of social and political education.

New developments with regard to educational content and educational policy in the Netherlands and other Western European countries pose a threat to the position of political education on the one hand, but on the other they offer possibilities of placing more emphasis in subject matter on internationalization.

3. Political education and the International Dimension: new possibilities for integration.

3.1. Basic education for young people

In a great many European countries, including the Netherlands, there is an increasing tendency to lengthen the period of basic education - that is compusory education for all pupils. Equally international is the tendency to focus the educational program on knowledge. This implies a prominent role for academic subjects.

In general, the necessity and importance of basic education is explicitly acknowledged. The insight has been accepted that pupils should acquire skills which are considered indispensable in our (Western European) society now and in the future. Deficiencies in the area of basic skills could lead to unbalanced personal development, and undermine the ability to cope politically and socially. Basic education is also important for the improvement of the qualification level of the working population. Furthermore, basic education can set limits for the responsibility of the school. In other words, what belongs to curricular and what to extracurricular socialization? What is the basic task of the school, and what is not? One of the selection criteria in determining the content of basic education is:

> what knowledge and skills are essential for functioning as a member of a more and more internationally oriented society, the lack of which, if they were not learnt at school, would be a lasting handicap?

This criterion is particularly important to the further consolidation of the status and position of Political Education, and the intergration of international aspects in subject matter. However, this does entail that choices must be made within this broad field of global studies. For time at school is not only limited, it is also expensive. And not everything the media bring into our homes or what zealous action groups passionately advocate ranks as an object for information transfer or determination of standpoints at school. In this context it should be observed that the Dutch government (central educational system!) will prescribe learning outcomes, as the U.K. also intends to do. Learning outcomes can be seen as minimum qualifications, involving knowledge, insight and skills, which all pupils must at least possess on leaving school. The Dutch government has commissioned the National Institute for Curriculum Development to submit proposals for all 14(!) compulsory subjects of basic education at the end of 1988, in consultation with educational institutions and social

groups. These subjects include two modern foreign languages, and the subjects Geography, History, Economics and Social and Political Studies. The latter are not to be taught as an integrated cluster but as separate subjects with their own specific objects of study.

The necessary choices to be made among international themes will be between: development education (the North-South issue), East-West relations, and the "high-priority" European Dimension (which will be discussed in more detail further on).

In the Dutch situation, increasing explicit attention to international issues will of course not be limited to the curriculum for Political Studies. Geography, History and Economics will also make room for international aspects in the proposals they submit, in keeping with their own identity. Traditionally, Geography and History teaching has always included discussion of Third World poblems, the power blocks Russia and America, and Europe. However, the linkup between subject matter in different fields deserves further study and consultation in order to achieve a more coherent educational offering. Analysis has shown that many methods used in the social sciences overlap, and this leads to fragmentation. Perhaps needless to say, there is no intention of adding "new subject fields" to the social sciences. The object is to define the "basics" of international themes, and to integrate these in the subjects of compulsory basic education.

Example

* DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION	G	H	E	P
	E	I	C	O S
	O	S	O	L T
* EAST-WEST RELATIONS	G	T	N	I U
	R	O	O	T D
	A	R	M	I I
* EUROPEAN EDUCATION	P	Y	I	C E
	H		C	A S
	Y		S	L

Summing things up, in Western Europe, one can observe a tendency to lengthen the period of compulsory basic education to the age of 15/16 and to develop core curricula with learning outcomes. In the Netherlands, the functions ascribed to basic education clearly point out the necessity of social and political education.

Basic education for young people in a more and more internationalized society would be incomplete and unbalanced if it did not explicitly include social, political and cultural characteristics of our (Dutch) society in relation to characteristics of other societies.

3.2. Integration of development education in social and political education

The integration of development education in Dutch schools has a broad social and political basis. This is reflected in the initiation of the Educational Project for Development Aid (EPOS, 1982-1986) and the National Development Education Network (LNO) established in 1986. This national network was initiated by the Ministers of Development Aid and of Education and Science, at the request of Parliament. The objective of the National Development Education Network is to help guarantee a permanent place for development

education in the school curriculum, in a manner in accordance with the principles of good teaching, in order to promote greater awareness of development issues and to increase public support for development aid. This network, which will be operative until 1992, is a joint undertaking of institutions active in the field of curriculum development, research and in-service training and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The network also cooperates closely with teachers at primary and secondary schools. The National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) sees to the project management.

There is a general consensus regarding the necessity of structural attention to the Nroth-South issue in education. As for the question how to realize this educational aim, little or no agreeement existed a few years ago. The idea of "letting a thousand flowers bloom" caused schools to be flooded with an incessant stream of lesson letters, files on countries, newsletters, slide series, video tapes, source books, etc. Gradually, a "mountain" of teaching materials grew, consisting for the most part of non-commercial publications. However, looking back, their influence on the content of education has been negligible. A study done in 1980 showed that teaching on the North-South issue for 14 to 16-year-ods was rather fragmentary and one-sided. Many methods used, the survey concluded, hardly offered pupils political insight into the relations between the Third World and our world.

It came to be realized that for an effective improvement of education, i.e. more coherent knowledge regarding the background and origins of the development problem and possible solutions, more is needed than a large quantity of teaching materials. Especially in our "no-nonsense" era, this calls for a carefully planned development and implementation strategy. In the Dutch situation, this entails that implementation can only be effective if development education is made a compulsory element of

the curricula for the social subjects. It should not be taught as a separate subject, but integrated into the existing curricula, as an integral theme in the thematic field "International Relations" in political education. A recent Unesco study on global themes in education also argues in favour of the "infusional approach" when it comes to new subject matter.

The Network has designed core curricula for development education to be used in the social subjects, with the general goal:

> to cultivate in pupils the knowledge, skills, sense of values, and attitudes necessary for a sound insight into and a well-founded opinion about the North-South issue: the existence of people in Third World countries compared to and in relation to that of people in wealthy countries.

The following elements of subject matter are important:

a. the ways of life of people in Third World countries;
b. the poverty problem, the development issue and developent aid;
c. thinking in terms of development.

These elements have been fleshed out in terms of goal and content for each subject, and as it were "parcelled out" to offer maximum opportunity for integration.

Curriculum for development education:

	Primary education	1st stage of secondary education 12 - 16 years	2nd stage of secondary education 16 - 19 years
Contents	- The ways of life of people in Third World countries, in relation to the situation in wealty countries.		
		- Background: the issues of poverty and development, development cooperation.	
			- Opinions on the development issue

In primary education, the emphasis will be on introducing the pupils to the existence of people in Third World countries. The pupil learns about the various ways of life in the Third World: its cultural diversity. In secondary education, further light will be shed on this existence by gradually devoting more attention to the poverty problem, the issue of social development of Third World countries and its relation to development in wealthy countries and development aid. In addition, to add depth to the pupils' insight and offer a better basis for forming opinions, several views are discussed on the backgrounds of and possible solutions to the North-South problem.

Political education focuses on tension and conflicts arising from underdevelopment, discussing such topics as: the national and international balance of power, human rights, cultural problems, Dutch development aid policy, opportunities for citizens to participate.

Besides the above-mentioned core curricula for development education in the subjects Geography, History, Economics and Political Education, model lesson series and handbooks have been produced. In addition, more and more regional workshops are being organized for teachers, in which opportunities are also offered for cooperating with museums and Third World organizations. From August 1989 onwards, all efforts will be aimed at dissemination and in-service training. For this purpose, arrangements have been made with educational publishers and examination boards.

In all honesty it must be admitted that, in spite of the fairly good infrastructure for the coordination of development, training and research activities and an annual budget of one million dollars, the position of development education in classroom practice remains marginal for the time being. The problem is that development education has to compete with other claims on the curriculum like peace education, environmental studies, intercultural studies,

consumer education, law-related education and recently in the Netherlands, studies of World War II in relation to the present. Moreover, research has shown that teachers are not interested in in-service training, and pupils generally do not feel very involved with the topic "Third World". Or, to quote what a large number of pupils recently claimed: "Pop music does more to call attention to the world's problems than Dutch politics." We need only think of "Live Aid" in 1985 and the Nelson Mandela concert of June 1988.

In brief, with the installation of the National Development Education Network, the Dutch Government has made a constructive contribution towards the internatialization of the curriculum of social studies. This great step forward could prove to be of lasting importance within the perspective of the future introduction of basic education. In order to improve the quality of development education and give it a structural place in classroom practice, activities are coordinated in the fields of curriculum development, research, designing examination programs, analysing teaching material, information supply, initial and in-service training, counseling and curriculum evaluation.

3.3. Embedding the European Dimension in education

A third factor which could lend a more international character to political education is the draft resolution of the Ministers of Education of the European Community in May 1988 regarding the consolidation of the European dimension in education. By means of several new coordinated measures in the period 1988-1992, the resolution is meant to contribute to:

* young people becoming more aware of the European identity, the value of European civilization and of its foundations, particularly the protection of the priniciples of democracy, social justice and respect for human rights;
* young people realizing the advantages of the Community, but also what challenges they will encounter on gaining

access to a larger economic and social territory;

* young people improving their knowledge about the historical, cultural, economic and social aspects of the Community and its Member States, and realizing the significance of the cooperation between the Member States of the European Community and other countries in Europe and the rest of the world.

To achieve a "Europe for the Citizens", the Member States have been urged to take measures within the limits of their own specific educational policies. More specifically, there are plans to publish a policy document focusing on a structural place for the European dimension in the educational programs for History, Geography, Economics and Social Sciences, among other subjects. Initial and in-service teacher training should also explicitly make room for the European dimension. Within Member States, this could be realized by offering high-quality teaching material and instructing staff at teacher training colleges. An interstate way of achieving this aim is cooperation between teacher training colleges, with the object of increasing the mobility of students and teachers. In any case, it is clear that the European Community will stimulate cooperation between teachers to promote the integration process. For pupils, too, more and more opportunities will be created for actually experiencing what everyday life is like in other European countries.

With a view to the "magic" year 1992 - Europe without boundaries - colloquia will be organized under the auspices of the European Commission. The aim of these colloquia is to analyse the effectiveness of curriculum and implementation strategies now in use, and explore possibilities of collaboration. From 1989 on, a Summer University will be held each year for staff of teacher training colleges and specialists. It is hoped that this exchange and experience will lead to the discovery of new and better strategies for introducing the European dimension. In short, the next few

years will be dominated by European Unification. Of course, this is partly motivated by the desire to strengthen Europe's economic position in relation to Japan and the USA. In 1992, a comparative study will have to prove whether young people's knowledge has actually improved. Already it is evident that the available funds and the political will vary from country to country.

Developments until now

Over the last 10 to 15 years, a wide range of initiatives has been taken at national and European levels aimed at bringing Europe or the so-called European dimension into the schools. Handouts have been written for teachers, colourful information brochures have been distributed, teachers' conferences have been held, joint projects have been launched, audiovisual materials have been developed and model curricula have been presented. However, from recent publications we observe that the so-called European dimension is only marginally represented in curricula, teaching methods and classroom practice in the European memeber states. A comparative study of several countries has yielded extremely disappointing results. Poor results, however, demand an analysis. Why do the publications of non-governmental organizations in Germany, the Netherlands and Britain have so little influence on Social Studies curricula and classroom practice? Is this to be blamed on the quality of the teaching material and handbooks published, or on the absence of a development and implementation strategy? Or are materials developed that the average teacher can do without? Or is an NGO such as a small-scale centre for European Studies doomed to a place on the periphery of the educational system, its impact reaching no further than a few interested schools? Or is it because public support for European education is lacking, while national authorities sit on the fence? Or is it due to the absence of a well-constructed curriculum project offering a coherent description of development strategy, evaluation,

training and dissemination?

In any case, it is evident that the suggestions put forward in various papers are rather incoherent, and lack sufficient basis to offer a perspective in the medium term. Attention is focused on teachers, schools, development of teaching material, and a more prominent role for non-governmental organizations, without any indication being given of the minimal conditions for a structural embedment of the European dimension. Structural embedment entails the compulsory inclusion of the European dimension in the teaching matter of Social Studies. Without this, discussion of Europe at school will remain an entirely noncommittal matter, up to the willingness of teachers to adopt such themes. This would imply a continuation of current classroom practice, in which Europe comes up for discussion once in a while, more or less accidentally, without systematic embedding and without specially developed didactics.

If the European Dimension is to acquire a more prominent and meaningful place in Dutch education, a core curriculum will have to be formulated, to which various interest groups contribute, and which puts forward valid proposals on content, place and didactics of this peripheral thematic field. Furthermore, suggestions should be offered how to incorporate the European Dimension into existing school subjects such as History, Economics, Geography and Political Education, and practical tips should be given for classroom teaching. The high priority of a core curriculum as a starting point is to do with fundamental developments in Dutch educational policy (see paragraph 3.1.).

Conditions for improving quality

It is obvious that teachers play a key role in actual educational innovation. Consequently, teacher training colleges, which are primarily responsible for initial and in-service training, should be involved in plans for

implementation of the European Dimension in an early stage. The limits and possibilities of the individual teacher, and thus of classroom practice, should also be taken into account. However, for teacher training a document, a core curriculum must be available containing clear-cut proposals on goal, content, place and didactics, and suggestions for incorporation in existing subjects. Such a curriculum framework could serve as a basic document, reflecting a nationwide consensus. Such a basic document could guide the development of teaching material, tests and the content of in-service training activities. This basic document should give a balanced and sound description of the various dimensions of the "theme Europe". This could be achieved by defining a political, an economic, a geographical and an historical dimension, to be discussed in the lessons for each subject or cluster of subjects. On no account should European education be treated as a separate school subject, but integrated into the compulsory programs for existing subjects.

In order to devote more and better attention to the European dimension, a national plan must be developed and carried out within the formal educational system. If the responsibility is left to non-governmental organizations, the informal circuit, the effects will remain limited, since this will continue the present non-committal situation. Only centrally prescribed examination programs (= basic education and learning outcomes) can lead to large-scale educational change. This is a question of professional status. A curriculum project with expertise at its disposal in the fields of curriculum development, evaluation and training, and addressing itself to the planning of implementation activities, is likely to succeed.

Action Plan for European dimension in the Netherlands

A. Curriculum development

- qualitative analysis and assessment of the usability of

teaching materials on the European dimension;

- analysis of the European dimension in (examination) programs for History, Geography, Economics, and Political Education;
- development of a core curriculum for the European dimension, with learning outcomes described in terms of dimensions (subject aspects) of Geography, History, Economics, Political Education;
- the design of testing instruments and experimental tests to go with the core curriculum;
- the revision of existing teaching material or the development of new exemplary material which is readily transferable and usable with existing methods.

B. Implementation

- passing on of the core curriculum to teacher training colleges for initial and in-service training;
- small-scale, regional in-service training centres for teachers;
- teachers' conferences for information exchange;
- integration into examination programs;
- contacts with educational publishers.

Proposals for cooperation at European level

- Curriculum development, research and training activities within individual institutions. Making a survey of existing expertise in Europe by means of national reports or supplementary reports on institutions in Europe with specific know-how.
- Launching of small-scale European projects, in which know-how in different fields is brought together. For example curriculum development, didactics, textbook analysis, in-service training, information exchange, etc. Research into new ways of using media to support activities aimed at teachers and pupils.
- Establishment of a central European coordinating body, which not only keeps records of curricula, materials,

research results, etc., but also proposes new initiatives and is familiar with the state of the art in all member countries.

In summary, the draft resolution of the Ministers of Education in the European Community of May 1988 constitutes an important political impulse towards strengthening the position of the European dimension in education. In this resolution, all Member States are urged to take measures to integrate the European dimension in existing subjects such as History, Geography and the social sciences. The result of this initiative in 1992 - Europe without boundaries - should be that young people have more insight into the historical, cultural and political aspects of Europe. At the same time, the efforts of the formal educational system towards embedment of the European dimension offer opportunities for more European cooperation and coordination in the field of political education.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The extent to which an effective international component can be added to curricula and educational programs for political education strongly depends on the content, status, scale and quality of this subject. The position of political education (or civics) varies quite a bit from country to country in Europe. The same obviously goes for starting points, goals and content.

It seems as if political education, certainly in the sense of democratic political education, is not a high priority issue in everyday classroom practice. German, but also British publications suggest that the place of political education in formal documents is marginal, limited to knowledge of how the political system itself works. In the Netherlands, we count ourselves lucky that thinking about social issues is an accepted phenomenon in education and society. And that there are means of converting these basic

notions into concrete plans of action.

The necessity of internationalization of political education is widely accepted in Western Europe, the USA etc. But on the other hand, the question is: who participates in this discussion and at what level? Is it only the so-called Globalists, or evangelists preaching a new gospel for education? For we are all familiar with the countermovements, who demonstrate through nationwide actions that modern man no longer knows his own world, and is hardly aware of his own historical values, if at all. More and more people in the Netherlands, for instance, claim that "young people know more about other culturer than about their own."

Naturally, this is a matter of finding a balance between basic knowledge about one's own, "national" environment and larger social units. What must be avoided at all costs is provincialism leading to cultural and political alienation. I think it is realistic to assume that widely acepted themes like the North-South issue and the introduction of the European dimension will not lead to an internationalized curriculum for political education, for this demands a continuous interwovenness of international aspects in the subject matter.

However, particularly in the Netherlands, conditions are favourable for strengthening the international dimension in educational programs (annual plans, methods, training) by making inclusion of development education compulsory within the theme "Europe". In this context it is of strategic importance to establish a "European Platform" for more systematic exchange of experience and information. Such a platform can initiate, coordinate and supply information, thus contributing significantly to the improvement of the quality of political education and the international dimension. At the RCPA/IPSA Europe I already argued in favour of establishing such a platform and making a list of activities in order of priority.

5. Afterword

Every so often, there is a wave of publicity on the theme "young people and politics". In the sixties, it was said that teenagers were rebellious, in the course of the seventies they were indifferent, and more recently, a shift towards conservatism was observed. What remained the same was the tone of concern about the political life of young people. Generally speaking, teenagers have little interest in political matters, easily adopt other people's prejudices, tend to offer facile solutions to complex problems, and get most of their information about politics from television. In other words, politics is not an everyday topic of conversation for young people. Enquiries often implicitly identify politics with party politics. One may ask whether many teenagers react against politics because there is not enough scope for other forms of political activity. Indifference need not imply a lack of all interest in politics. In this connection it is worthwhile to mention what Dutch tenagers entered in a writing competition on politics: "Politics is not something I give much thought to. I've got plenty of other things on my mind, except when the government comes up with something new about cutbacks, unemployment, and that sort of thing." The opinion of young people on politics is not only a judgement on current politics, but also a judgement on the adult world and their own future prospects. We should always bear in mind that the youth is the target group of political competence. So that they can make their own choices, and when and where they desire, can democratically initiate processes of change.

A 16-year-old girl writes:

Politics
Are a messy mix
Everything going every which way
From drugs to economics
My father is a right-wing man
My mother prefers the socialist clan
It can bore me silly, it really can!

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